

Praise God for Marriage!

Ephesians 5: 21-33

August 4, 2024

Please open your Bibles today to Ephesians 5. Back in June, you might recall we talked about the Rainbow Gospel and with the sacrilege at the opening ceremony of the Olympics, you might want to go back and listen to that message again. We also talked about Godly Manhood and Godly Womanhood. Today, we want to put the two together and talk about Godly marriage. Say marriage. Did you hear about the two cell phones that got married? The rings were beautiful and the reception was amazing!

Marriage is of primary importance to God and as such it should be to us, His children. His Word is chock full of commands and advice on marriage as well as both good and bad examples. It appears in the first chapter of the Bible and its corruption, when the sons of god married the daughters of men, is one reason for the global flood of Noah's day. Someone once said, "The secret to a happy marriage is still a secret." I beg to differ, not only because of Nancy but because of God's prescription in Ephesians 5. Please stand if you are able as we read it, "21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

It used to go without saying that marriage consisted of one man and one woman. Sadly, we can't simply assume that anymore and must state it clearly. God created marriage with the first man and first woman and marriage is His idea. He owns the patent or the copyright. You can have cheap imitations and knock offs which are many today, but let's understand from the getgo that godly marriage consists of one man and one woman, not two men or two women, not one man and three women, or any other variation thereof. You can call that marriage, but it certainly IS NOT godly marriage. And as Christians that is our concern. The world can do their own thing. We mourn and pray for them because sin always causes pain. But in the Church, in the Body of Jesus Christ, we are to follow Him who was and is the living embodiment of the holy

Word of God. And so we find in this New Testament passage a prescription for Godly marriage and it clearly includes one male husband and one female wife.

But godly marriage is much more than that. Say More. It tells us how the two are to relate to each other. It doesn't get into all the weeds, and we all know marriage has some weeds, but it lays out general principles that can be applied in those weeds. Let's look at some of those principles.

Number 1, say submit. Vs 22 tells wives to submit to their husbands, but that comes after vs 21 that tells both to submit to each other. Submission has become a dirty word today. It has been corrupted. The Greek word means to subordinate or obey, to **voluntarily** put oneself under the authority of another. And there's the rub. None of us want to do that. "You're not the boss of me. I want to be in charge and I want to call my own shots." Which is why submission has fallen into such disfavor today.

Paul says we're supposed to submit to each other and actually it seems this verse not only applies to marriage but is written in the larger context of the local church. And we certainly don't want that. We don't want to submit our own ideas to anyone else, or our preferences about the color of the carpet, the type of music, our parking space, our anything else. But Paul says **we are** to submit out of reverence for Whom? Christ! If we revere Christ, we will submit to each other. That doesn't mean we become doormats and always yield on every point, especially doctrinal ones, we shouldn't, but on things that aren't Biblical, as we submit to one another, we prefer one another above ourselves and that is very different from what the world says. When's the last time you submitted to anyone about anything? The right of way, your spot in line, the stating of your opinion, etc. Rom 12:10 tells us to, "Honor one another **above** yourselves," and the KJV says, "Preferring one another." Instead of preferring the self. And so that's something **every** Christian should do, married or single, widowed or divorced. Submit to other believers and prefer them above ourselves.

Then Paul says in verse 22, "Wives submit to your husbands." This passage has been abused by men who demand submission. Notice it doesn't say, "Husbands, tell your wives to submit to you." It is addressed to wives. Don't read her mail. Let her read her own mail and let her deal with God in whatever way she needs to. Men, you read your mail which we'll get to in a bit. In the meantime, wives do need to read theirs. Wives are to submit to their own husbands as unto the Lord. As unto the Lord indicates it regards spiritual matters in particular. There should be a general attitude of submission rather than opposition, rather than defiance, rather than independence. Remembering that both submit to each other according to verse 21.

Vs 23 makes it clear this is about authority. Say authority. It's not about intelligence, wisdom or anything else. There's 3 verses for wives and 9 for

husbands. Who does Paul think is the most hardheaded? Sorry men. That's us. "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.." It doesn't mean the husband makes all the decisions, no! Any man that doesn't consult his wife is not like Jesus. I didn't design marriage, God did. And God did it in such a way as to bring maximum glory to Himself and benefit us in the best possible ways. If there was a way to design marriage that would be any better for you, for your family, for your children, for your church, for society and for His Kingdom, He'd have done it. This is the very best. And it's glorious when we do what He's called us to do.

Gary Thomas in his book, *A Lifelong Love*, says this, "Marriage provides me with a sister in Christ who walks with me as I serve God. It gives me a holy outlet to enjoy and celebrate sexual pleasure. It provides a stable foundation from which I can raise children. It offers a glimpse to our neighbors of the relationship between Christ and the church. It provides the deepest friendship I have ever known." And I agree. It should. That's the way God designed it!

Vs 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. If the husband is the head, that means he's ultimately responsible which takes some burden off the wife. The Secret Service agents submit to their directors who are ultimately responsible, who are the ones called before Congress. And who resign or get fired when they obviously blunder. Men, **we** are responsible before God, more than our wives. They'll have to answer for their own selves, but let's realize the responsibility God has given us husbands.

Now we get to the husbands' mail. Why are husbands like lawnmowers? They're hard to get started, emit foul odors and don't work half the time! Vs 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. And there's the standard for us men. If Paul had just said, "Husbands, love your wives," and stopped, we'd be a lot better off. He didn't. Led by the Holy Spirit, he finished the sentence. What is the standard for our love? As Christ loved the church! And in case we forget how Christ loved the church, he reminds us that Jesus gave himself up for His bride. Say ouch. That's love! Love that surrenders, love that sacrifices, love that lays down its life for another! Wives, you want to trade places? This is not real popular today, but it's Biblical.

Men, don't demand submission from your wife until you've given yourself up for her. And when you do, you'll realize you won't demand submission. You will prefer her over yourself. You will yield to her. Too often we say we'd lay down our **lives** for our wives but we won't hand her the remote. I'm pretty sure giving our lives includes the lesser things as well. And if we love our wives like Christ loves the church, we won't take advantage of their submission just as Jesus never takes advantage of His church.

A couple of points, the most important of which is to realize that as John Piper says, our marriages contain a meaning far deeper than we realize for we husbands and wives are actually modelling for the world the relationship between Jesus and His Church, which takes our marriages to a whole nother level. Paul mentions the church by name 6 times in this short passage on marriage and refers to her 11 times. He makes it clear how our marriages are intertwined with this larger, higher and holier relationship which makes our marriages holier, larger and much more important. Every wife represents the church and every husband represents Jesus. No pressure. Together they are to help us all understand this deeper relationship with Christ. I used to think Paul applied this analogy to the church but he's actually applying a deeper analogy of the relationship between Jesus His Church to marriage. God created marriage to illustrate this higher spiritual relationship. Which is why marriage is so much more holy than we ever even realize. It's not just about you or your spouse or even about you together. It's about Christ and His church first and foremost and then about us.

Let's also realize that our marriages embody the image of God. Say image. In the very first chapter of the Bible we find (Gen 1:27), "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The very first mention of human beings tells us that God created male and female in His image. Not just Adam alone or Eve alone, but together we reflect the image of God in some way. Whole libraries of books have been written about what it means to be created in God's image so it is deeper and broader than just male and female. It includes the ability to choose, to create, to love and feel, etc. But let's not lose sight of the fact that our marriages reflect God's image.

Do you know why the Devil is attacking marriage today with all these cheap substitutes that aren't marriage at all? This is why! It brings disgrace to God the Father and to Christ His Son! To the church! That's why what happened in the Olympic Opening Ceremonies happened. Do you know why the Devil's attacking Christian marriages with everything he's got? This is why! The last thing he wants is a favorable representation of Christ and His Bride or a favorable representation of the image of God. And we, as followers of Jesus, as part of His Bride have the high privilege and great responsibility of showing the world, through our marriages, what it's like to be married to Jesus and what God Himself is like. How are we doing at that?

Now, let's go farther in this passage. Vs 25, Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Jesus loved the church for our own good and for His. And when we husbands love our wives as Christ loved the church, it's for her own good and for ours. We are one as Genesis 2 tells us and as Jesus quoted and Paul right here. We should want our wife's holiness and lead her in that. In too many homes, the wife and mother is forced to be the spiritual leader because the husband and father has abdicated his role and given it up. How about leading together? How about seeking God together in the washing of His Word and in prayer? For men, as we love our wives in this way, we are really loving ourselves. It's not either/or, it's both and. It's a win/win/win/win for husband and wife and children and the church.

And it's into this holiest of all human relationships that God has placed sexual intercourse. The Hebrew word for sex is Yada and means to know completely. Intimately. Fully. One Hebrew scholar says it means, "The mingling of the souls." Not just bodies. That's why it's just for one man and one woman within marriage. Not for before marriage, that's called fornication, and not for anyone else while we're married, that's called adultery. Only between a married husband and a wife.

And it's in this holiest of human relationships through sexual intercourse that God has designed to bring children into the world. That they might grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord learning from the interplay between mom and dad. In Malachi 2:15 we are told, "Has not [the Lord] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring." God loves kids!!

According to the January/February 2024 issue of Touchstone Magazine, St. Augustine defined the benefits of marriage as procreation (creating children), fidelity (being true to another), and sacramental permanence. The article went on to say that even the US Supreme Court has recognized the uniqueness of marriage. In 1888 the Court described marriage as "something more than a mere contract... it is the foundation of the family and of society." The court said that. In 1942, the Supreme Court declared, "Marriage and procreation are fundamental to the very existence and survival of the [human] race." And in 1971 the Minnesota Supreme Court said the, "institution of marriage as a union of a man and woman, uniquely involving the procreation and rearing of children within a family is as old as the book of Genesis." Sadly, our courts today are saying something very differently. That marriage can be two men or two women and soon to include other definitions as well, you can be sure. Marriage is no longer for the good of the church, the human race, society, for the creation of or protection of children, but only for the individual as long as he or she feels fulfilled or happy. God have mercy.

Praise God that godly marriage benefits husbands, wives, children, society, the church, and the world. Marriage is God's invention, His idea and His design and it works best when we do it His way. Imagine that. The Bible has plenty more to say on it, but I hope this glimpse today at Godly marriage will encourage each of us to do what we can to improve our own marriages as well as others in the church.

Godly marriage is like the high jump bar in Paris, very high. Unfortunately, no husband, no wife, and no marriage is perfect and we all fall short. Some have broken. Thank God for His grace and invite His help in your own marriage and in your heart and home. Most importantly, if you've never become a part of Jesus' Bride, the holy church, do that today! He gave Himself up for you and for us all that we might be His. Accept His gift, become His by giving your life to Him as we pray.